



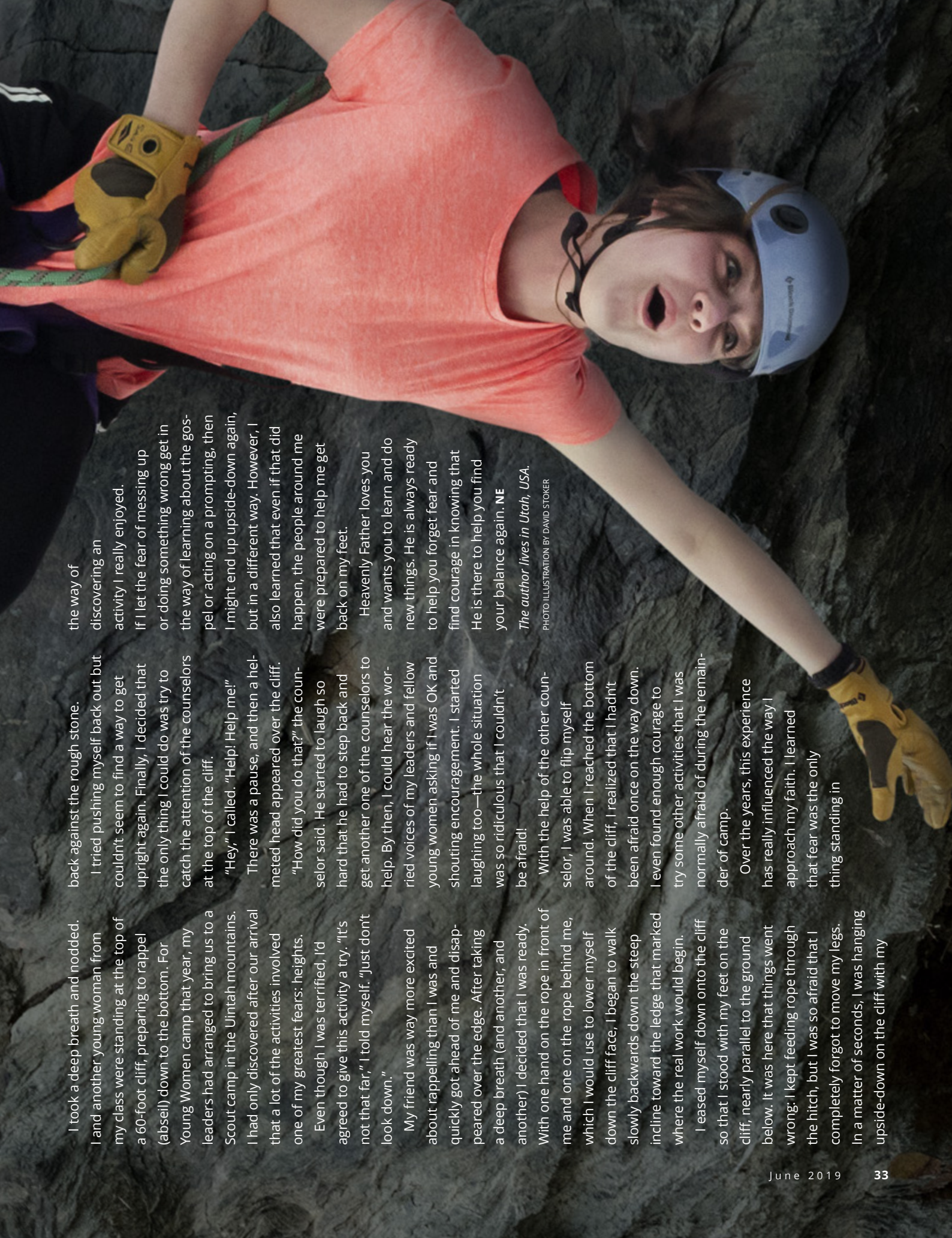
FLIPPING FEAR UPSIDE- DOWN

*Fear rooted
me to the spot.*

*Unfortunately, I
was already over
the edge.*

By Megan Fairbanks

“OK,” the counselor said. “Just remember: move your legs and feed the rope through the hitch. If you lose your balance, don’t worry. Your belay partner at the bottom has a hold of the rope. Got it?”



I took a deep breath and nodded. I and another young woman from my class were standing at the top of a 60-foot cliff, preparing to rappel (abseil) down to the bottom. For Young Women camp that year, my leaders had arranged to bring us to a Scout camp in the Uintah mountains. I had only discovered after our arrival that a lot of the activities involved one of my greatest fears: heights. Even though I was terrified, I'd agreed to give this activity a try. "It's not that far," I told myself. "Just don't look down."

My friend was way more excited about rappelling than I was and quickly got ahead of me and disappeared over the edge. After taking a deep breath (and another, and another) I decided that I was ready. With one hand on the rope in front of me and one on the rope behind me, which I would use to lower myself down the cliff face, I began to walk slowly backwards down the steep incline toward the ledge that marked where the real work would begin.

I eased myself down onto the cliff so that I stood with my feet on the cliff, nearly parallel to the ground below. It was here that things went wrong: I kept feeding rope through the hitch, but I was so afraid that I completely forgot to move my legs. In a matter of seconds, I was hanging upside-down on the cliff with my

back against the rough stone.

I tried pushing myself back out but couldn't seem to find a way to get upright again. Finally, I decided that the only thing I could do was try to catch the attention of the counselors at the top of the cliff.

"Hey," I called. "Help! Help me!"

There was a pause, and then a helmeted head appeared over the cliff. "How did you do that?" the counselor said. He started to laugh so hard that he had to step back and get another one of the counselors to help. By then, I could hear the worried voices of my leaders and fellow young women asking if I was OK and shouting encouragement. I started laughing too—the whole situation was so ridiculous that I couldn't be afraid!

With the help of the other counselor, I was able to flip myself around. When I reached the bottom of the cliff, I realized that I hadn't been afraid once on the way down. I even found enough courage to try some other activities that I was normally afraid of during the remainder of camp.

Over the years, this experience has really influenced the way I approach my faith. I learned that fear was the only thing standing in

the way of discovering an activity I really enjoyed. If I let the fear of messing up or doing something wrong get in the way of learning about the gospel or acting on a prompting, then I might end up upside-down again, but in a different way. However, I also learned that even if that did happen, the people around me were prepared to help me get back on my feet.

Heavenly Father loves you and wants you to learn and do new things. He is always ready to help you forget fear and find courage in knowing that He is there to help you find your balance again. **NE**

The author lives in Utah, USA.

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